

111TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. RES. 329

Recognizing the anniversary of the tragic accident of the steamboat ship  
SS Sultana.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 2, 2009

Mr. SNYDER (for himself, Mr. WAMP, Mr. BERRY, Mr. ROSS, Mr. BOOZMAN,  
and Mr. DAVIS of Illinois) submitted the following resolution; which was  
referred to the Committee on Armed Services

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## RESOLUTION

Recognizing the anniversary of the tragic accident of the  
steamboat ship SS Sultana.

Whereas the explosion of the SS Sultana on April 27, 1865,  
is considered the worst maritime disaster in American  
history;

Whereas the steamboat ship SS Sultana exploded on the Mis-  
sissippi River 7 miles north of Memphis, Tennessee, at  
2:00 a.m.;

Whereas roughly 1,800 of the 2,400 passengers lost their  
lives in the tragedy;

Whereas 2,000 passengers on the SS Sultana at the time of  
the explosion were Union prisoners of war recently re-  
leased from the Confederate Andersonville and Cahaba  
Prison Camps in Alabama;

Whereas several of the former prisoners of war were suffering from disease and extreme malnutrition caused by the overcrowded and unsanitary conditions at the prison camps;

Whereas the explosion was presumed to have been caused by a defective boiler trying to overcome the current of the Mississippi River;

Whereas the enormous loss of life was attributed to an overloaded vessel caused in part by poor oversight on behalf of the Union commanding officers responsible for the release of the prisoners of war;

Whereas up to 300 of the initial survivors of the explosion later died from burns, hypothermia, or exposure;

Whereas then Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton stated in his annual report for 1865 that the loss of “over 1200 officers and greatly increased . . . by an improper and unnecessary overloading of the boat”;

Whereas only one of the several individuals responsible for the conditions of the steamer or the overloading of the vessel which contributed to the tragedy and large loss of life was ever prosecuted; and

Whereas the disaster was not in the newspapers or magazines of the time and is scarcely remembered today: Now, therefore, be it

1       *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2               (1) recognizes the 144-year anniversary of the  
3       tragic accident of the steamboat ship SS Sultana;

4               (2) honors the memory of the soldiers and pas-  
5       sengers who lost their lives in this disaster;

1           (3) regrets the lack of military and civilian  
2           oversight that led to the explosion and tremendous  
3           loss of life; and

4           (4) rededicates itself to honoring all our vet-  
5           erans and military families with the highest level of  
6           support in quality resources, equipment and services.

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